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## Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3005

April 9, 2018

COMMITTEE  
FINANCIAL SERVICES  
SUBCOMMITTEES:

CAPITAL MARKETS, SECURITIES,  
AND INVESTMENTS

OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATION

TERRORISM AND ILLICIT FINANCE

PROBLEM SOLVERS CAUCUS  
CO-CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Maureen Ohlhausen  
Acting Chairman  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Acting Chairman Ohlhausen:

I write with concern regarding our policy toward financial telephone scammers, especially those targeting seniors. With tax season already underway, our nation's consumer protection agency, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), must take swift action to reassure my constituents that they will be protected from sophisticated scammers looking to take advantage of them and gain access to their sensitive personal or financial information.

As you may know, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) impersonation calls are among the most widely used and costly scams targeting all Americans, and especially senior citizens. Scammers, posing as IRS employees, make unsolicited and threatening phone calls, attempting to extract information or money from unsuspecting victims by claiming they owe back taxes or other fees, sometimes even threatening these men and women with arrest unless victims provide money via prepaid debit cards, gift cards, money orders, or wire transfers.

The U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), which investigates incidents of IRS impersonation, has referred to this scam as "the largest and most pervasive scam in our agency's history." During Fiscal Year 2017, more than 12,000 victims reported over \$60 million in total monetary losses nationwide. My state, New Jersey, is one of the top six hardest hit states in the country, with victims suffering reported financial losses of more than \$2.6 million.

It is concerning that the scams are successfully and increasingly targeting seniors; according to AARP, seniors lose \$3 billion each year in savings due to these scams. The highly-effective IRS impersonation scam is putting a strain on already limited resources, and this Administration's FY 2019 budget requests \$161 million for TIGTA audits and investigations, a 5 percent decrease from FY 2017 funding.

While TIGTA, federal law enforcement, and other agencies are working to combat the threat, our government needs a comprehensive, interagency commitment to cracking down on this highly effective scam, led by the FTC. I request detailed information on how the FTC is helping consumers protect themselves during tax season, and I welcome any recommendations the Commission might have for Congress to help improve enforcement. I would also like to know how the FTC partners with state agencies such as the New Jersey Office of Consumer Protection to address these troubling financial crimes.

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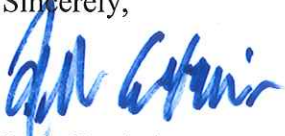
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Tax season is difficult enough for seniors and New Jersey residents who face higher taxes because of the recent tax hike bill, without a heightened risk of fraud from scammers posing as IRS officials. I urge you to make immediate use of your authorities to double down on these serious scams and take urgent actions to protect American consumers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Josh Gottheimer". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "J" and a cursive "G".

Josh Gottheimer  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS